

71
*Sleeping in Jesus the Blessed Privilege of
dying Christians, and the great Relief
of their disconsolate Survivors;*

IN A
S E R M O N

Occasion'd by the

D E A T H S

O F

Mr. JOSEPH REDDALL.

A N D

M A R Y his *Wife.*

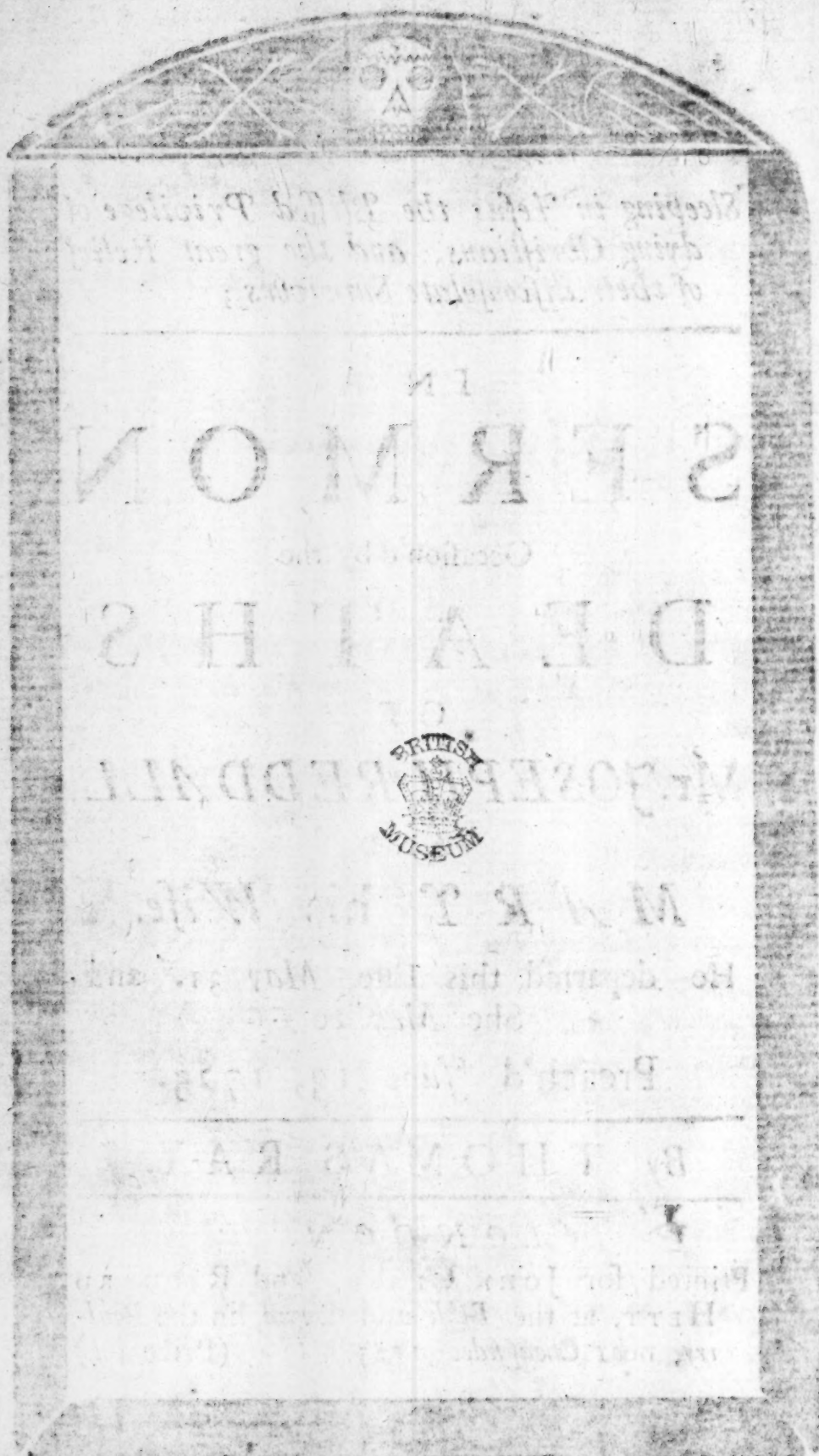
He departed this Life, *May 31.* and
She *May 30.*

Preach'd *June 13, 1725.*

By THOMAS RAY. *A*

L O N D O N :

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TO

Mr. H-----

Worthy Sir,

THIS plain Sermon was neither at the Time of its Composure, or Delivery, in the least design'd for the Press; but the Advices of my Friends concurring for its Publication, I resolv'd to address it to you.

For to you, Sir, under God, I am indebted for many Advantages I have enjoy'd; my early Inclinations for the Ministry were first cherish'd by your Benevolence, nor have I wanted considerable Encouragement from you, during the Exercise of it.

And really, when I consider how much Gratitude less oblig'd Persons oftentimes profess; I cannot but think my self concern'd to make the utmost Acknowledgments to you, having been a kind Patron to me in my tender Years, and a Generous Incourager of my youthful Studies.

There are only two Things I am now principally concerned to wish for.

~~That you, Sir, may meet with all the most glorious Recompences that are promised to those who liberally support and countenance the Ministers of Jesus Christ.~~

And that I may obtain Grace to improve the Obligations you have laid upon me for the Service of Mankind, and to answer the just Expectations and Requirements of that Redeemer, whose I am, and whom I serve.

I have but one Thing more to add, That your Acceptance of this Discourse under your Patronage and Protection, will be a fresh Demonstration of the great Obligation I have been always under to acknowledge my self,

S I R,

Your very much oblig'd,

very humble Servant,

Barnet, June

21, 1725.

T. Ray.

T H E S.

I THE S. IV. 14.

*For if we believe that Jesus died,
and rose again ; even so them al-
so which sleep in Jesus, will
God bring with him.*

WE have now, my Brethren, been waiting on God, in a Duty that carries us as much into the Divine Presence, as it is possible for us to be, in the present World ; but our departed Friends, we may presume, have before now made their solemn and formal Appearance before his heavenly Throne. *Behold God is great ! and we know him not ;* touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out ; his Greatness is unsearchable ; neither do we know how to order our Speech before him, by Reason of Darkeness and Distance from him. But though the Distance is so great, as to us ; yet, the Persons, whose Death we commemorate, have been brought near unto him : Yes, they have made their Appearance before that God, at whose Rebuke the Pillars of Heaven tremble,

* whose

whose Presence is astonishing to the brightest Angels, and which was more glorious than the most eminent Saints, and Prophets of old were able to endure. For so terrible was the Sight of God, upon the fiery Mount, that even *Moses*, that distinguish'd Favourite of Heaven, cried out : *I exceedingly fear and quake* *. They have now seen him, that is invisible to mortal Eyes. O ! 'tis a vast and mighty Change the Sons of Men undergo by Death. In this World we converse only with Creatures like our selves ; but after our Decease, we are brought before the great Creator himself, and may then, in Imitation of *Job's* Language, say : † *I have often heard of Thee by the Hearing of the Ear ; but now mine Eye seeth Thee.*

'Twas an unusual, and melancholy Providence that gave us the Occasion of attending a double Funeral at once. Death, not content with its ordinary Execution, repeats its Stroke ; and the two Heads of a Family were slain and cut off by it, almost together : and the devouring Grave, which is one of those four Things that are never satisfied, and that never say, It is enough, has open'd its gaping Mouth wider than either I, or perhaps any of you have ever seen it before. 'Twas really doleful to observe, that when you had there deposited one of our Friends, there was an horrid Vacancy still remaining to be supply'd, and that impatiently cry'd, *Give, Give!* It abated not of its rigo-

* Heb. xii. 21.

† Job xlii. 5.

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rous Demands, till it had enclos'd the one as well as the other in its cold Embraces ; and till they were both swallow'd up in that Mortality, which will be the common End of us all. They have both of them suffer'd that Dissolution which poor Disconsolate *Hezekiah* was so much afraid of ; and through fear of which many righteous Persons, as well as he, *have all their Life-time been subject to Bondage.* And they have both pass'd through that Judgment, the very Discourse whereof made such a harden'd Wretch as *Felix* tremble.

We have, 'tis true, already follow'd them to the Grave, in one Sense ; but you must not forget the Time is hastning, the Day approaches, when we shall all follow them to the Grave in a more real Manner ; for their Mortality and Death is the Example of our own : And though, whither they are gone we do not follow them now, yet we shall follow them afterwards. What is usually said of Persons near their End, I may very justly apply to you all ; that there is not one of you, that is a Man long for this World. God Almighty give you Wisdom and Grace to consider your Latter End, to improve the Thought that your Time is short ; that in this World you are but Pilgrims and Strangers, and have here no continuing City. Ever since our Apostacy from God, 'tis appointed for all Men once to die ; and God has been true to this Determination. It was dreadfully verified in the actual Death of the first Transgressors of this Law, and of Millions
of

of their Offspring afterwards; nor have we the least Prospect of any Escape, no, all go to one Place, even the Grave, and there is no Discharge in that important, though unexperienc'd War. " But however, the Death of the Righteous is so different from that of the Generality of the World, and ought to be treated with so different a Regard, that a Discourse, meerly upon Mortality, would hardly come up to the Dignity of the Occasion"; or at least would be very defective of that Instruction and Comfort, which in such a Case we may receive. In order therefore to address my self to you, in the most agreeable Manner I can to the present sorrowful Occasion, I have chosen the Words that have been now read, for the Subject of Discourse. And to understand the true Design of them, there is no need of looking any farther back than the foregoing Verse, in which the Apostle begins a new Argument. The *Thessalonians* had lately, either by a natural Death, or the Pains and Violence of Martyrdom very probably, lost some of their beloved and religious Friends. The great Point therefore the holy Apostle aims at, is to prevent their inordinate Grief, and excessive Sorrow upon this Account. For this Reason he exhorts 'em not to sorrow, as others which have no Hope, even the Heathens; who had but very obscure Apprehensions of a State and Life after this: Or whatever Expectations they might entertain of the Soul's Immortality, had yet no hopes of the Resurrection of the Body.

It's

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It's no Wonder the *Gentile* World should be at a Loss in this Matter, since they wanted the Scripture Revelation, the only Ground of Hope; for I freely acknowledge for my own Part, were it not for the Gospel of Christ, I am no ways able to prove your Bodies will rise again, after once they are dead. It cannot therefore be strange, that the *Heathens* should be greatly afflicted when any of their Friends were deceas'd; they look'd upon them as irrecoverably gone, their Bodies as sunk, and lost for ever, and therefore exprest their passionate Concern for them in a very extravagant, absurd, and ridiculous Manner: they tore their Hair, beat their Breasts, cut their Flesh, and ran howling up and down in the most desperate Manner. No, says the Apostle, don't you grieve and sorrow at this unaccountable Rate, remember, you are Christians, and not *Heathens*, and though they have no Prospect beyond the Grave; yet the Principles of Christianity, you have embrac'd, discover a glorious Light in this important Concern, and afford you a lively Hope: *For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so, them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.*

In these Words there are these three Things considerable,

I. A blessed Account and Representation of dying Christians. *They sleep in Jesus.*

B

II

II. A comfortable Assurance and Declaration made with Relation to them. *God will bring them with him.*

III. The Ground and Reason of our believing this, viz. *The Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

And these, I think, are Three as proper and suitable Heads, as can at any Time be insisted upon, in a Funeral Sermon for departed Saints. I begin, therefore, with the First.

I. The blessed Account and Representation of dying Christians. *They sleep in Jesus.*

I shall presently explain what we are to understand by the Comparison of Death to Sleep; but we may first take Notice of the other Part of this Clause, wherein the Sleep, or Death of good Men is said to be in Jesus. We have the like Phrase 1 Cor. xv. 18. where the Saints that were deceased, were said to be *fallen asleep in Christ*. In like Manner Believers, according to the Stile of the New Testament, are said to *put on Christ*, they are said to be *in Christ*, to *abide in him*, to *have their Life hid with him*, to *walk in him*, to *dye with him*, to *

* Col. ii. 12.

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be buried with him, and to rise with him. Now this Way of Speaking is undoubtedly design'd to signify the great Regard Believers have to Christ, and their secure Interest in him. It is apply'd to our first Conversion, *Rom. xvi. 7.*—*who were in Christ before me.* Sometimes to Sanctification and Obedience in general ; thus it is said, *he that is in Christ, is a new Creature.* And we are told, *Rom. viii. 1.* that *there is no Condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,* which is afterwards explain'd of them *who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* In short, all our religious Concerns do so universally center in him, and so much, in every Respect, *with him it is we have to do ;* that it is no wonder this Way of Expression is so common. And therefore to die, or *sleep in Jesus,* is to die in a firm Belief of the Gospel, in an entire Hope of Salvation, through Jesus Christ, in a Conformity to his Purity and Holiness, and in that blessed Union with him, which arises from hence. But I now proceed to consider the Metaphor here made Use of to represent Death. True Christians are here said to SLEEP in Jesus. Now this Metaphor, it must be confess'd, is apply'd by the Prophet *Daniel, Dan. xii. 2.* to the Death of Mankind in general, both of the Just and Unjust. *And many of them that sleep in the Dust of the Earth, shall awake, some to everlasting Life, and some to Shame, and everlasting Contempt.* But it is most frequently

made Use of to signify the Death of the Righteous, as not only here in our Text, and the Verse that goes before it, and also that which follows after it ; but so likewise it is observed concerning *David*, * *that after he had served his Generation by the Will of God, he fell asleep.* And we have the same Account of *Stephen*, † *that he fell asleep.* I shall now endeavour to show you the Propriety and Suitableness of this Comparifon, in the Three following Particulars.

1. This Allusion feems to imply in it a comfortable Release and Discharge from all kinds of Trouble, Misery, and Sorrow.

This World is a constant Scene of Vexation and Grief, we are here furrounded with many Calamities, and experience a great deal of Bitterness in the present Life. Innumerable are the Afflictions to which we are expos'd, the Troubles and Sorrows that we labour under. But now, though good Men must die, and they can obtain no Discharge in that War ; yet, to them, Death it self is a Discharge from every other Burden and Grief. It is called *the last Enemy that is to be destroy'd* ; which supposes, that when we enter into this Conflict, we have already gone through all our other Trou-

* Acts xiii. 36.

† Acts vii. 60.

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bles, and that none of them can ever affect or disturb us any more.

Many of our Troubles arise from our Fellow-Creatures, we oftentimes see Reason to complain of the severe Usage and malicious Treatment of our profess'd Enemies ; and sometimes that those, whom we esteem'd our Friends, were only such in Appearance, and contrary to their Pretences, and our own Expectation, prov'd Injurious, Deceitful and Treacherous to us. The Sons of Violence and Cruelty swarm in the World, Injustice and Oppression prevail on the Earth, and many Ways might the Power and Malice of our Enemies prove dangerous to us, if not prevented and restrained by a gracious God. The Heart of the Wicked is set upon Mischief, and since they are Strangers to the Rules of Righteousness and Truth, Goodness and Love ; no Wonder if we meet with many Vexations from them. Sometimes they are let loose upon us, as Satan himself was upon *Job* ; and believe me, the Works of their Father the Devil they will do. How do they wound our good Name, which ought to be preserv'd with the most choice and tender Care ; and which is more precious than any Thing they can give in its Room ? How do they abuse their Neighbours by opprobrious Language, hard Speeches, and vile Actions ; and thus give Occasion for Grief, and great Searchings of Heart ? But now the Sleep of Death is a safe Retreat from all
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the Storms of Violence and Cruelty, *Job 3. 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19.*

Again, in the present State we are often afflicted with Pain and Sickness, innumerable are the Diseases that attend us, and to which we are liable every Moment of our Lives. What a Train of dreadful Distempers, that all the Year roam about the World for the Affliction or Destruction of the Sons of Men, and what severe and intolerable Pains do they often bring along with them; so that the Lives of such Persons are made up of Labour and Sorrow, of sore Travail and Grief; and most commonly is this the Case when Death approaches. How are their concluding Lives made miserable, with Groans and Agonies, the melancholy Fruits of Sin, and the bitter Preparatives for the decisive Stroke of Death? It is very melting to hear them complain, *Deut. 28. 67. In the Morning would God it were Even; and at Even would God it were Morning.* And it wounds a compassionate Ear to hear them crying out, under the Anguish of exquisite Pains and Torture, Oh! you cannot imagine what we feel, and go through. It is a very common and friendly Wish, at such a Time, that if it would please God they might have some Rest, and sound Sleep to compose them: Well, Death, the soundest of all Sleep, removes all their dolorous Sensations, and affords the Believer a compleat and pleasant Rest; by it the Soul is tran-

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translated into that World, where the Inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick; and the Body is repos'd in the Grave, out of the Reach of all the Noise and Uneasiness that attends this troublesome World; so the Promise is made: * *He shall enter into Peace, they shall rest in their Beds, each one walking in his Uprightness.* And as Sleep is a sweet Recess and Retirement from the Distractions, Confusion, and Hurry of the World; Death is much more so. When peaceful Slumbers close our Eyes, we are wholly insensible of what passes in the World; are quite ignorant of the Joys or Sorrows, the Hopes or Fears, the Sins or Sufferings, the Business or Diversions of other Men. How much soever they possess our Minds before, yet these Things have no Place in our Thoughts, at that Time; nor have we the least Regard or Concern about them. And thus the Righteous, at Death, are happily got beyond all the Anxieties, tormenting Cares and Labours of the present State; and the Darkeness of the Grave, how ever horrible to us, conceals what ever might be any Offence or Disturbance to them. Thus, as a Mark of special Favour, the Promise was given to that good King *Josiah*, that † *he should be gathered unto his Fathers, and into his Grave in Peace, and that his Eyes should*

* Isa. lvii. 2.

† 2 Kings xxii. 20.

16 *Sleeping in Jesus the*

not see all the Evil which God determin'd to bring upon *Jerusalem*. He was to be hous'd before the Vengeance came down, nor should the Storm break out till he was secur'd in a peaceful Harbour. In short, as the Night, by its deep Silence and Tranquility, affords an agreeable Truce from Business, gives a comfortable Recess from the toilsom Service and Fatigues of the Day; so Death answers all these Ends, and in a much more compleat and excellent Manner, to the People of God.

II, The Comparison of Sleep in our Text, was, without Doubt, design'd to intimate the Advantage that thereby will accrue to the Saints.

In natural Sleep the Spirits, that were very much wasted and consumed in the Service of the Senses, are renew'd hereby, the Body is restor'd, the Decays of Nature repair'd; and at the springing Day we are made fresh and active, for new Labour and Exercise. What Sprightliness and Vigour does a healthy Person enjoy, when divine Providence gives the Blessing of a comfortable Night. But alas! all this is but a low and narrow Representation of the blessed Change that shall be made in the Bodies of Believers, when they awake, and arise from their Beds of Dust; what a blessed Addition will be made of new Life, Vigour and Beauty. These Bodies are now a Burden and
Clog

Blessed Privilege of dying Christians. 17

Clog to us, and are vile and despicable, upon many Accounts; but they shall then be adorn'd with an heavenly Brightness and Glory, and clothed in all the Beauty of Immortality; they shall be no more the Instruments of Unrighteousness, the Seat of tormenting Pains, nor the Residence of inherent Distempers. It would be now our Happiness to be absent from this Body, and present with the Lord; but our consummate Felicity will then consist in being present with the Lord, and clothed upon with our House which is from Heaven.

In what divine Splendor and Dignity did our Saviour appear, at the Time of his Transfiguration; and he will, perhaps, at his second Coming shine still more illustrious, in all the Charms of Love, and Beauties of a Saviour, that will be conspicuous in him; and yet the Apostle assures us, *he shall change our vile Bodies, that they may be fashion'd like unto his glorious Body*.*

But why do I enlarge upon this, my best Abilities can never reach to describe the admirable Properties, the vast Capacity, Endowments and Excellencies of a glorified Body. The Apostle has given us the most comprehensive Account of the Matter †. So that by this

* Phil. iii. 21.

† 1 Cor. 15. 42, &c.

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* Phil. iii. 21.

† 1 Cor. 15. 42, &c.

Means, Death becomes a real Advantage ; and herein the Wisdom and Grace of God marvelously shine forth, that Death, which was the Desert and appointed Punishment of Sin, is now become, in some Sort, the Means of Immortality. That as *Joseph* was, by a surprizing Circuit and Revolution, brought from the Prison to the Principality ; so by the Grave we are refined and purified for Heaven, the Image of the earthly *Adam* must be abolish'd, that we may bear the better Likeness of our blessed Redeemer.

III. There is another comfortable Truth imply'd in this Comparison, namely, that the Empire of Death shall not be perpetual.

Why else is it called a Sleep, when we lye down, we do it in Hopes of rising again, and seeing the Light and Beauty of another Day. After a few Hours the End of Sleeping is answer'd, the cheerful Light of the Morning revisits us, scatters the Slumbers that sit upon our Eye-lids, and sweetly invites us to return again to the Exercise and Enjoyments of Life. So, and much more than so, will it be with respect to Death ; we shall awake and arise out of our Sleep. It's evident the Spirit of God design'd, by this soft and pleasant Metaphor, to sweeten the Thoughts of Death, and reconcile us to the Expectation of it, and Submission to it ; but I shall have Occasion to take farther Notice of this under the next Head, which is,

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II. The comfortable Assurance and Declaration that is made, concerning such who sleep in Jesus. *Them will God bring with him.*

In this there is somewhat supposed, and somewhat plainly asserted.

1st. Here is somewhat supposed, and that is, that they shall be raised again.

Their Continuance in the Grave, is utterly inconsistent with their being present at the great Solemnity designed for them; nor can they be qualified for their Attendance upon a triumphing Saviour, till deliver'd from that Death and Dissolution they are under; and this kind Office our blessed Saviour hath promised and undertaken to do for us: * *And this is the Will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting Life; and I will raise him up at the last Day.* So again, † *whoso eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood; hath eternal Life, and I will raise him up at the last Day.* Holy Job was sensible of this, and seems to have had clear Light in this important Matter, even in those obscure Ages of the Church; though his Body was to be dishonour'd and debased

* John vi. 40.

† Ver. 54.

with the most loathsome Corruption, and reduced to the most contemptible Condition ; yet he knew that in his Flesh he should nevertheless see God*. And indeed, if the Word of Christ deserves any Regard, or Credit, it is impossible we should be mistaken in this Point. He hath taken sufficient Care to give us all imaginable Satisfaction, that this is his Intention ; and as the Testimony of Jesus Christ may very safely be depended upon, we need not entertain the least Doubt or Suspicion in this Case. If any Thing in Scripture is plain, his Promise upon this Account, I am sure, is so ; but our Text chiefly leads us to consider,

2d. What is here asserted ; namely, that he will take them to accompany and attend him at his second Appearance : *so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

I have taken some Pains to find out, with which of the former Parts of this Epistle these Words may be best connected. I would not dogmatically advance Assertions of my own, however, am ready to apprehend the Apostle's Reference here may be to the last Verse of the foregoing Chapter ; which perhaps may not improperly be render'd, *the Coming of our*

* Job xix. 26. Vide also on this, Dr. Sherlock upon Prophecy, Dissert. 2. p. 257, &c.

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Lord Jesus Christ, with all his Holy Angels.
The Apostle's Words are $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\ \pi\alpha\nu\tau\omega\nu\ \tau\omega\nu\ \alpha\gamma\iota\omega\nu$
αὐτῶν, now if the Word *αἴγιον* be suppos'd to
be an Adjective, it may be apply'd indifferently
to Angels or Men; and indeed, in the Old
Testament, if I mistake not, the blessed An-
gels are frequently to be understood by God's
Holy Ones*; and if so, then the Sense of the
Words before us will appear plain and easy;
That besides the Holy and Upright Angels,
who shall minister to Christ, at that awful
Time, he will also bring with him all the de-
parted Saints that have ever liv'd upon Earth;
they shall make up his Retinue, adorn his blef-
sed Triumphs, and add every Thing they can
to the Lustre of this his splendid and magnifi-
cent Appearance. It was certainly exceeding
pertinent to the Apostle's Design, to mention
this glorious Circumstance. For the Comfort
of disconsolate Survivors, he lets them know
that though for the present the Bodies of
their Friends saw Corruption; yet Christ in-
tended to vouchsafe to them a most extraordi-
nary Mark of Honour, even such as should per-
fectly extinguish and obliterate all the Dis-
grace of their former Condition. They lament-
ed the Loss of their beloved Friends, and their
ignominious State in the Grave; but there's

* *Bishop Pearson on the Creed, upon the Article of the Communion
of Saints, p. 352.*

reviving Support under all this ; for Christ will raise them from the Dead, and they shall then be admitted to a glorious Society and Equality with Angels, be numbered amongst the Redeemer's distinguished and chosen Friends, and allowed all the Intimacies of his divine Familiarity and Love. Nay, there seems indeed to be something more Magnificent and Glorious in Christ's bringing them with him, than in the Attendance of Angels ; for they are not the Redeemed of the Lord as we are : If they were, as some imagine, indebted to his Death for their Confirmation in Glory ; yet not for the original Source and Foundation of all their Happiness. True Believers will therefore certainly make a most illustrious Figure at that Day. It will be the Consummation of all Things, the Accomplishment of our Saviour's glorious Designs of Grace and Love, of those ardent and affectionate Prayers, you read in the 17th of *John*, the blessed Issue of his Pains and Agonies in the Garden, and upon the Cross ; he will bring them with him, to show how faithful, how powerful, and how successful he hath been, and make it evident that blessed are all they that trust in him.

I have left but little Room for the

III. and last general Head ; namely, that the Death and Resurrection of Christ, is a sufficient Ground for us to believe, that those that sleep
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in Jesus he will bring a long with him, when he comes to Judgment.

But the Truths I have dwelt upon, are of a more uncommon Nature, and do not so often fall within the Compass of other Discourses as this. And besides, the principal Force of the Argument lies in a little Room: *if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.* Now the Belief of his Death is urged as necessary, because unless the Reality of that were allowed, all the Accounts of his Resurrection might be suspected of Fallacy and Imposture. And the Belief of his Resurrection can be no ways dispensed with, for upon that depends all the Certainty of those Promises he made upon Earth; if he did not himself rise from the Grave, we know not what Power he can have to accomplish our Resurrection, nor can any Stress be laid upon all his Promises of eternal Life to us. There are only two Things needful to secure this Point, that Christ shall bring his Saints with him at the last Day, having raised them out of the Grave, and they are his Intention and Declaration so to do; and then his Ability for it. Our Saviour himself puts the Matter upon this Foot, with the faithless *Sadduces* *: *Ye do err*, saith he,

* Mat. xxii. 29.

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not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power
 of God; that is, they neither considered the Resolution God had declared in the Scriptures of doing this, nor the divine Power, which was able to accomplish it. However, I would not be guilty of such a Violation of the Rules of Charity and Decency, as to imagine I have now to deal with a parcel of *Sadduces*; but shall take it for granted, you believe that Jesus died and rose again; and if so, the Doctrine I have been upon very plainly and necessary follows from it.

The Characters of the Deceased usually fill up the next Place, in Discourses of this Nature; but you see how little Time I have left for that. No Body can doubt of the Sincerity of my Respect for them, but really I have but a poor Talent, and as little Inclination that way; what I say therefore about this, shall be but short.

The publick Office, for the Burial of the Dead, has taught us to express our Regard to the Hand of God, who has taken to himself the Souls of our dear Brother, and dear Sister here departed; and I think these endearing Expressions of our spiritual Relation to the Servants of Christ, are much to be commended. But then, if with just Deference to the superior Number of great and worthy Persons, who favour this Form, I might declare my Sentiments

Blessed Privilege of dying Christians. 25

ments. With Submission I can't but think these sacred Titles, with some other Expressions that belong to them, should not be prostituted (as too commonly they are) to so many vile and notorious Sinners; but whatever Exceptions I take against the promiscuous unlimited Application hereof, to all Sort of Persons, yet I assure you, I have no Objection at all in the present Case, and shall therefore, in Compliance with this Form of devout Words, now make Use of the same myself.

Our departed Sister then, whose Death was the first, had the longest Warning of her approaching Dissolution. I had sometime before she was seiz'd, a good Opportunity of conversing with her about spiritual Matters; she then took Occasion to intimate how deeply she had been affected with the publick Prayers, offer'd up in this Assembly; but upon this I will not enlarge, for an obvious Reason. She declared her sincere Reliance upon Christ for Salvation, and her humble Hope for the Forgiveness of all her Sins through him; she seem'd to express an awful Sense of God's Holiness and Righteousness, and a sorrowful Regret for her own Unlikeness to him, which she was not able to utter without many Tears. But I remember, *They that sow in Tears, shall reap in Joy.*

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Joy *. There's one Thing I cannot easily forget, and that was the great Indignation and Concern, with which she lamented the general Prophanation of the Sabbath; that when on the Lord's Day she frequented this Assembly, she saw such Numbers of thoughtless Wretches at the Doors, and in the Streets, that show'd no Honour to that sanctified Day, nor any Regard about another World, and the Salvation of their precious Souls.

Our dear Brother, whom God so soon hastned after the Companion of his Life, that they might, as it were, begin their Glory together, has for a long Course of Years behav'd himself in the Church of God with great Inoffensiveness and Usefulness, and in the World with great Acceptance and Esteem. I am perswaded but few can say they so conscientiously live up to all the Light they have, as he did. How many alas! that boast themselves of their sublime Speculations, and Orthodox Notions, that come shamefully behind him, as to that excellent Spirit he was of. Our Saviour says: *Then are ye my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* So that by this Stroke we have lost a Friend of

* Psal. cxxvi. 5.

Blessed Privilege of dying Christians. 27

Christ, as well as a Friend of ours. A little before his Ascension to Glory, he desired me to pray that God would forgive his Sins, and I believe no Body doubts of his Compliance with that Term, upon which the Success of such a Petition depends; but that he was truly disposed to forgive them that had trespass'd against him.

Sinners, 'tis well this Summons was not sent to you; how dreadful for you to have had your Eyes shut and closed by Death in your unconverted harden'd State. You see what a blessed Thing it is to sleep in Jesus. Methinks I hear you say: *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his*; but if ever you expect to sleep in Jesus, you must now live to him, and walk in him, *i. e.* renouncing at once your former Course of Sin and Folly. Enter your selves the Servants and Disciples of Christ, *make haste and delay not to keep his Commandments*; for only they that do his Commandments, have a Right to the Tree of Life, and shall enter thorough the Gates into the City. Receive him for your Lord, whose Wisdom is necessary to guide and enlighten you in the Way of Salvation, and whose Authority must always have the greatest Weight and Influence upon you; and be sure do not by any Means forget that Regard and Love that is due to him, upon the Account

of his enduring the Cross for your sakes. See what an all-sufficient Saviour he is, and what a powerful Interest he has in Heaven, and how fully able he is to recommend you to his Father's Acceptance and Love; without this, when your latter End comes, you will die in your Sins; and if I may be allow'd the Liberty of Allusion, you will sleep in Satan, not in Jesus. But enter now into Covenant with God through the great Mediator, implore his Compassion to your guilty unsanctify'd Natures, betake your selves to constant and fervent Prayer, attend upon the publick Ordinances of the Gospel, converse much with the Scriptures, and without ceasing intreat for that Grace, which alone can enable you to mortify all those fleshly Lusts that war against the Soul, and those sinful Inclinations that are so destructive to the Sons of Men.

And these Advices, I hope, will especially make a deep Impression upon you my Friends, the Offspring of those sincere and aged Saints, that are now, we trust, with God, and translated to Glory. Consider the Providence, that has given Occasion for this Discourse, most nearly concerns you; and I would flatter myself with the Hopes, that however I am disappointed of Success as to others, yet this Sermon will not be lost upon you. Besides, you must be supposed to be most thoroughly af-

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affected with this Stroke, that is so surprizing to all that have heard of it; and therefore it may well be expected that your Hearts should be very tender, and ready to receive with the greatest Seriousness whatever is said to improve it. I perswade my self you will endeavour not to lose the Benefit of this solemn Dispensation, and the Use that has now been made of it; be earnest, I beseech you, in secret Prayer, that God would sanctify the Dealings of his Hand with you, and lift up the Light of his Countenance upon you.

— But then, as you must not despise the Chastening of the Lord, so nor faint when you are rebuked of him; do not give way to an Excess of Sorrow in this Case, but comfort yourselves with the Thought that your departed Parents are sleeping in Jesus, and that them also will God bring with him. Remember that still though they die, yet your Redeemer lives. That you have an almighty, an all-sufficient Friend in Heaven, and there is none upon Earth you should desire besides him. Though upon your own Accounts you may regret this double Loss, yet really it was most for their own Advantage, and Comfort to quit this World, and enter Heaven together. Methinks I can't help applying what *David* said of *Saul* and *Jonathan* to their Case: *They were lovely and*

30 *Sleeping in Jesus, &c.*

and pleasant in their Lives, and in their Death they were not divided *. May the same harmonious Temper, that was in them, prevail and abound in you.

I shall close all in my own hearty Desire to you, and in the Words with which St. Paul closes his second Epistle to the *Corinthians*: *Finally Brethren, Farewell, be perfect, be of good Comfort, be of one Mind, live in Peace, and the God of Love, and Peace shall be with you* †.

* 2 Sam. i. 23.

† 2 Cor. xiii. 11.



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